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A Brand's Journey to the White House

Case: Donald Trump

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Bachelor of Business Administration

Economics and Business Administration

Bachelor's Thesis

April 2017

Author(s) Title Number of Pages Date	Mikko Santonen A Brand's Journey to the White House Case: Donald Trump 54 pages 8.4.2017
Degree	Bachelor of Business Administration
Degree Programme	Economics and Business Administration
Specialisation option	Marketing
Instructor(s)	Raisa Varsta Head of Degree Programme
<p>On 20th of January 2016, Donald Trump was inaugurated as the 45th President of the United States. The inauguration worked as a conclusion to a historic election like which the United States has never seen before. The heated battle between the two most disliked candidates in history left the people of the United States polarised and gasping at the results. This thesis will take a look into this election from a branding perspective and analyse the role of Donald Trump's brand with the help of a well-established branding model called the brand resonance pyramid. The analysis will provide a structured look into the journey Trump's brand took to the White House and pinpoint the relevant elements that guided this journey.</p> <p>The analysis was based on reliable media sources and literature that provided the relevant facts required to understand the complex whole of the 2016 elections and evaluate the role of Trump's brand in it. The brand resonance model presents six brand building blocks that need to be fulfilled for brand resonance to be possible. These blocks are salience, imagery, performance, feelings, judgements and resonance, and they form a pyramid that reveals any strengths and deficiencies a brand might have.</p> <p>The analysis clearly revealed the emotion-driven path Donald Trump has taken to brand resonance. The positive and unique associations linked to the Trump brand managed to diminish the effects of the brand's deficiencies that would have otherwise threatened the resonance. The results highlight the importance of emotions in modern branding and give a relevant case of how even facts can be ignored when strong enough emotions are at play.</p>	
Keywords	Donald Trump, brand, branding, associations

Tekijä(t) Otsikko	Mikko Santonen Miten brändistä tuli presidentti Case: Donald Trump
Sivumäärä Aika	54 sivua 8.4.2017
Tutkinto	Tradenomi
Koulutusohjelma	Liiketalouden koulutusohjelma
Suuntautumisvaihtoehto	Markkinointi
Ohjaaja(t)	Lehtori Raisa Varsta
<p>Donald Trumpista tuli Yhdysvaltain 45. presidentti 20. tammikuuta 2017. Virkaanastujaiset saattoivat päätökseen vaalit joiden kaltaisia ei Yhdysvalloissa aiemmin oltu nähty. Kiihkeä kamppailu kahden inhotuimman ehdokkaan välillä jakoi äänestäjät kahtia ja jätti ihmiset ympäri maailman hämmästelemään vähintäänkin yllättävää lopputulemaa. Tämä opinnäytetyö tarkastelee näitä vaaleja lähempää brändien näkökulmasta. Tarkoituksena on selvittää Trumpin brändin rooli vuoden 2016 presidentin vaalien yllättävissä tuloksissa. Analyysin tuotoksena syntyi selkeä ja kattava kuvaus Trumpin brändin matkasta Valkoiseen taloon sekä listaus oleellisista elementeistä jotka vaikuttivat vaalien tuloksiin.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyössä tehty analyysi pohjautuu luotettaviksi todettuihin medialähteisiin ja kirjallisuuteen, joista analyysin kannalta olennaiset faktat on poimittu. Kattavasti avatut taustat selventävät vaaleja edeltäviä olosuhteita ja antavat kontekstia kokonaisuuteen. Analyysi on toteutettu hyödyntäen Yhdysvaltalaisen markkinointiprofessori Kevin Lane Kellerin brändiresonanssipyramidia joka esittää kuusi olennaista brändinrakennuslohkoa, joista jokaisen tulisi täyttyä, jotta brändiresonanssi olisi mahdollinen. Lohkot jotka ovat, brändin keskeisyys, suorituskyky, mielikuvat, arviot, tunteet ja resonanssi, paljastavat brändeissä piilevät vahvuudet ja heikkoudet.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyössä toteutettu analyysi selvästi paljasti Donald Trumpin kulkeman tunnevetoisen polun brändiresonanssiin. Trumpin vuosikymmenien aikana hankkimat assosiaatiot onnistuivat tehokkaasti peittämään toimintapohjaisten brändilohkojen heikkouksia, jotka olisivat muuten uhanneet brändiresonanssia. Tulokset korostavat tunteiden merkitystä modernissa brändäämisessä jopa siihen pisteeseen, että faktat jäävät toiselle sijalle.</p>	
Avainsanat	Donald Trump, brändi, brändääminen, assosiaatiot

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1 Introduction

If almost anyone would have been asked a couple of years ago that who would most likely become the next President of the United States after Barack Obama, nearly no one would have guessed the world-famous business mogul and reality television star Donald Trump. But the 2016 presidential elections came to a shocking conclusion in November when Donald Trump, a man whose participation was just until recently thought to be a public relations trick or a joke, was elected as the 45th President of the United States. Despite the prejudices and doubts, Donald Trump was able to repeatedly prove the sceptics wrong with the help of an extremely loyal and active supporter base. The results of the elections shocked people around the world leaving many wondering, how Donald Trump, a man with no political experience, ended up as the leader of one of the most powerful nations in the world. My belief is that the effective usage of the Trump brand and all of the associations linked to it played a key role in the surprising results of this election.

1.1 Thesis' Goals, Framework and Methods Used

This thesis takes a focused look at Donald Trump's presidential election campaign and attempts at finding out how the Trump brand was used and what kind of a role it played in the end result of the 2016 presidential elections. This thesis will give the reader a comprehensive look at the backgrounds of the election and provide an analysis of the different aspects of the Trump brand with the help of a well-established branding model called the brand resonance pyramid, developed by an American marketing professor Kevin Lane Keller. The brand resonance pyramid is a four-staged model designed to help brand managers build and manage brands that create intense, active and loyal relationships with the consumers. In this case, the brand resonance model helped analyse the Trump brand, that according to the results of the election, resonates highly with its target group. The model provides the structure to the analysis part of this thesis and helps us to better understand the different aspects of the 2016 presidential elections in a coherent way.

The analysis is based on various, credible media and literature sources that have a reputation of being accurate and insightful. Sources such as The Washington Post, The

New York Times, Politico, Politifact, Vox and The Atlantic provided me with information about the most recent events as they came along during the process of writing this thesis. The numerous media sources combined with my own dedicated following of the events and expertise provided by a wide range of professional literature on the subject, gave me the necessary tools to produce a reliable examination of the events of the 2016 elections. Kevin Lane Keller's book, *Strategic Brand Management*, functions as the theoretical base for everything related to the brand resonance pyramid. Along with Keller's work, other books complete the way this thesis considers brands and their meaning in the modern world. The very recent book about the life of Donald Trump called *Trump Revealed*, by Michael Kranish and Marc Fisher, provided many of the facts used when examining Trump's life and his path to presidency.

The initial idea for this thesis came in the spring of 2016 after Trump had just won his first major victories in the primary elections. In the beginning of March, Trump's momentum already seemed profound enough to have a real possibility of making him the Republican presidential candidate. At this point I began to systematically gather sources and analyse them from a branding perspective trying to identify elements that would give insight into Trump's personal brand's role in the election. The gathering of sources was a continuous process during the production of this thesis. I used a circular model for analysing the sources and iterating my conclusions throughout the election. I continuously monitored the chosen media sources and wrote down ideas and conclusions based on them. As new information came to light, I tested my conclusions and predictions based on how they were supported by the new information and developed situation. At this point, I would most often iterate my conclusions and begin the process from the beginning. Going through this model dozens of times during this process gives me confidence that the conclusions that I reached are correct to the current knowledge of the events. I use this same circular model in my work as an insight manager and data-analyst at a large marketing agency operating in Helsinki. This model has proven to be a great way to analyse for example continuously developing trends and pinpointing relevant elements in content analysis.

The actual writing of this thesis took place in the fall and winter of 2016. This thesis was mostly written chronologically, which places the bulk of the analysis in between November of 2016 and January of 2017, with some iterations done later on in the spring. During the writing process of the analysis Trump won the presidency, which made the relevance of the topic even more profound. The analysis is purely based on

literature and media sources that were available at the time. From these sources that were listed previously, I deduced the insights and data points used in this thesis to make conclusions about Trump's brand resonance pyramid and its structure. The ideas presented in the analysis are a collection of different analyses and surveys that depicted the different aspects of the Trump brand and its role in the elections. All of the data points and facts claimed in this thesis were verified by comparing multiple sources as these topics were covered by a myriad of news agencies with differing approaches and political orientations. This gave me a possibility to assess the truthfulness of each headline and form my own well-researched conclusions.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis can be roughly divided into three separate sections that all have different goals. In this chapter I will briefly go through these sections and explain the structure of this thesis to help the reader navigate the content as effortlessly as possible.

The first part of this thesis, consisting of chapters two and three, will provide the reader with a comprehensive explanation of how brands are viewed in this paper and go through the different levels of the brand resonance pyramid. Relying on professional literature, chapter two will take a look at the history of brands and why brands matter in the modern world. I will also briefly go through the set of characteristics that are traditionally associated with a strong brand. In chapter three, I will present the four levels of the brand resonance pyramid to help the reader get the most out of the analysis. This first part will give a deeper meaning to the ideas and terms used in this thesis later on.

In the second part of this thesis, consisting of chapters four and five, I will take a detailed look at the backgrounds of the 2016 presidential elections. Chapter four will introduce the reader to the relevant elements and terms of the U.S. presidential election system and give a brief look at the history of the Republican Party. Chapter five is completely dedicated to Donald Trump's history and path to his current position. Concentrating on the relevant aspects of these topics should lead to a comprehensive understanding of the framework that allowed the events of the 2016 presidential elections to unfold.

The third and final part of this thesis, consisting of chapters six, seven and eight, will contain the analysis and the conclusions derived from it. The analysis chapter will consider the relevant aspects of the Trump brand and try to extract the relevant factors that led to the results of the election. With the help of the brand resonance model, the analysis should reveal surprising elements that clarify the role of the Trump brand in the elections. The eighth chapter will conclude the analysis and summarise the findings.

2 Brands and Their Role in the Modern World

The term brand was derived to the business world from an Old Norse word *brandr*, which means “to burn”. This term was used for branding cattle, which is a centuries old tradition used to identify each owner’s livestock. (Keller 2013, 30.) In today’s world, the term brand is still actively used, but in a slightly more symbolic sense, as the terms definition has developed to mean something more broad and complex. Still, the same principle idea for a brand applies also in the business world of today. Manufacturers want their products to be identifiable as theirs.

In recent years, the word brand has suffered from overuse and misinterpretations. This is why the actual meaning of the term might prove hard to find. (Sipilä 2008, 48.) The situation has not been made any easier by the fact that many academics and professionals in the field have their own, slightly tweaked version of the definition (Cohen 2011). Despite the numerous interpretations, a general idea of what a brand is can be extracted and understood. This chapter looks into defining the term in such a way that its meaning to the modern world becomes apparent.

2.1 What Is a Brand

Today branding has developed into a more complex concept than just identification for different products. Nearly anything can be branded nowadays. Companies have been branding their products and themselves for decades, nations and cities brand themselves, as do organizations, private citizens and politicians. Some definitions of a brand, place the brand mark, or the logo at the heart of the concept. They stress the brand mark’s power and meanings to differentiate the brand from the competition

clutter and this way give brands a competitive advantage. (Riezebos & van der Grinten 2012, 9.)

The view of brands used in this thesis does not really concentrate on the logo of the brand, but to the ideas, expectations and unique associations it encapsulates. In this interpretation, the trademark or the brand mark is not the brand itself, but a symbol for it. Brand is a person's gut feeling about a product, company or a person based on previous experience or information obtained directly or indirectly from the brand. (Neumeier 2006, 1-2.) In this sense, the consumers make the brand. They decide whether it is worth following and identifying with. A great brand resonates with its consumers. It has been able to form a connection and inspire a deep and intense psychological bond that activates the consumer base and creates loyalty. (Keller 2013, 120.)

2.2 Why Brands Matter

Brands have been around in some form or another for thousands of years, so why are they suddenly such an important part of the modern world? More and more companies have been realising the true value of their brands and have systematically begun to build them towards a chosen direction. How much businesses value their brands is made apparent by the staggering valuations the brands are given. For example, the Coca-Cola Company valued their brand at over 70 billion dollars, which is 48% of their total market capitalization (see table 1). (Neumeier 2006, 13; Keller 2013, 36.)

Table 1. Brand Value as a Percentage of Market Capitalization (Keller 2013, 36).

Brand	Brand Value (\$MM)	Market Cap (\$MM)	% of Market Cap
Coca-Cola	70,452	146,730	48%
IBM	64,727	200,290	32%
Microsoft	60,895	226,530	27%
Google	43,557	199,690	22%
General Electric	42,808	228,250	19%

In recent history, companies like Apple have repeatedly shown what a brand can mean to a consumer as well. This is best illustrated by Apple enthusiasts' extreme behaviour when something Apple-related is about to happen. Such was the case in 2014 when Apple was about to announce the launch of the iPhone 6 and possibly the much-anticipated iWatch. People queued in front of the Apple stores for days even before the official announcement, to ensure that they are among the first in the world to get their hands on the new product. (Kalb 2014.)

2.2.1 Why Brands Matter to Businesses

Brands have become incredibly valuable to businesses as they provide the means to stand out and offer the consumer something more than just the product. One of the major factors that has led to the high valuation of brands described in the previous chapter, is an event that is sometimes called the product explosion. This is meant to describe the drastic increase of offerings in almost any given market in the last decades. This can be easily observed when for example buying groceries. Typical supermarkets have thousands of different products to choose from. The increased competition for attention has forced businesses to concentrate on building their brands and nurture the associations linked to them. (Riezebos & van der Grinten 2012, 2-3.)

Brands are also viable investing options for businesses because of modern trademarking laws. Legal protection for a brand allows businesses to make use of the full potential competitive advantage they can provide. The competitive advantage of brands mainly revolves around the certain favourable and unique associations linked to the brand in the minds of consumers. Well-structured brands serve as a sign of quality and can be used for significant price premiums in the market. (Keller 2013, 34-36.) All in all, these factors make brands extremely useful tools for businesses to grow and ensure their place in consumers' lives.

2.2.2 Why Brands Matter to Consumers

When looking at modern products, very little actual quality differences can be detected amongst the competitors. The competing brand offers more or less the same product with the same quality and features as the rest of the competition. So generally, brands provide a simplification for the purchase procedure for the consumer. Brands help

modern shoppers navigate thousands of brands on offer and form a routine, which makes, for example going to the supermarket a much faster and more efficient process. Buyers typically form a portfolio of brands that they routinely go for, without the need for straining research on which product is the best. (Sharp 2014, 152-153.)

However, in some cases, a brand can have a bigger role in a consumer's life than just acting as a passionless indicator of which product to choose from the clutter. Some brands have come to represent certain ideologies or types of people, which the consumer may identify with. In this sense, a brand can be a way for a consumer to effectively project their self-image and express certain values and traits they consider important. (Keller 2013, 34.)

This effect of brands communicating something more than just information about their products has led to a form of tribalism, in which people are seeking the brands that best communicate their values and self-images. Consumers often form a selection of brands that they buy to form a larger whole they strongly identify with. (Neumeier 2006, 40.) This way brands have developed into important social symbolic devices that people compare and follow closely. In the age where people are information-rich and time-poor, consumers look for heuristics that make their life simpler. In this kind of a world, well-structured brands function as anchors that consumer can attach their ideals onto.

2.3 Characteristics of a Strong Brand

Last few chapters have gone through what brands are and what kind of a role they play in the modern world, but what factors make a brand strong? A connecting set of characteristics or attributes have been found to link the most successful brands and especially the quality of their relationships with their customers. These characteristics help brands stay relevant in people's lives and protect the organization from competitors in crowding markets. In addition, a well-branded business attracts talented workforce and high-quality business partners to create base for further growth. (de Chernatony & McDonald & Wallace 2011, 24-25, 142.)

As mentioned in the earlier chapters, brands mainly exist in the minds of consumers and consumers create the demand, which ultimately enables a brand to grow strong. With this logic, a brand has to develop suitable brand personalities and convey

matching values with the target group to be able to form meaningful brand relationships. For a good brand relationship to form, the following seven factors need to be accounted for:

- *Love and passion* – Consumer should feel affection for the brand and desire it despite of the cost.
 - *Self-concept connection* – The brand has to give the consumer a sense of belonging or satisfy other social needs.
 - *Interdependence* – As the brand needs the consumer, the consumer must also need the brand in everyday life.
 - *Commitment* – The relationship between the brand and the consumer must be strong enough to last through good and bad times.
 - *Intimacy* – Consumers should feel familiar with the brand and know the organisation and values behind it.
 - *Partner quality* – Consumer should find the same traits from the brand as one would find from a good friend.
 - *Nostalgic attachment* – The brand should evoke pleasant memories in the consumer's mind. Past associations can create strong emotional bonds.
- (de Chernatony etc. 2011, 140-143.)

Behind every successful brand, there is always an understanding of the consumers and their needs. Brands succeed because they add something extra to the customer experience and fulfil the expectations the consumer has about the brand. By focusing on the listed factors, brands can identify weaknesses and strengths in their relationships with the consumers and launch efforts to develop themselves to a direction, which will strengthen their role in consumers' lives. (de Chernatony etc. 2011, 32-33, 142.)

2.4 What Is a Personal Brand

Branding is almost always primarily related to companies and products, but as was mentioned in the earlier chapters, nearly anything can be branded and a person is no exception. In some sense, every single person in the world has a brand of their own which has to be managed or otherwise it might develop towards an undesired direction. Personal brands are becoming more and more obvious and relevant as the world

digitalises. If a person has ever created any kind of an online account in Facebook, Twitter or anywhere else, he/she has left a digital footprint, which is a simple Google search away for anyone to see. (Hyder 2014.)

Realising the meaning and the permanency of a person's online identity has led to a trend of people systematically branding themselves professionally and socially. The same principles apply to personal brands as to any other kind of brands. You want to create certain unique and favourable associations that are closely linked to your name and to your person. (Hyder 2014.)

Celebrities and politicians have been using branding techniques for their personal brands for decades. Anyone can name a few celebrities and realise just some of the numerous associations linked to their names. This kind of personal branding has made it possible for celebrities to expand their brands to all kinds of new markets, from clothing to fragrances to books and so on. (Post 2004, 32-33.)

One example of a successful personal brand is the subject of this thesis, Donald Trump. He has been systematically developing his personal brand for decades and has been able to link strong and unique associations to his name. He has been a part of numerous high-profile ventures such as TV-shows, hotels, casinos, universities and even beef steaks, of which most carry his last name as the heart of the brand. All of this, his strong persona and memorable catch phrases such as "You're fired" and "Make America great again" have led to an extremely strong and memorable personal brand which effects will be further delved into later on in this thesis. (Post 2004, 16-17; Koffler 2015.)

3 The Brand Resonance Pyramid

The present thesis relies mainly on a theory called the brand resonance pyramid, which was developed by an American marketing professor Kevin Lane Keller to explain the necessary steps needed to create intense, active and loyal relationships with customers. The model looks at brands from a positioning perspective and provides insight to which degree the brand resonates with the consumers and how to start creating this brand resonance. (Keller 2013, 107.) In this chapter, the brand resonance

model will be presented in its entirety, so that the structure of the analysis will be easy to follow.

The brand resonance model describes the brand building process as a four-step series, in which the success of the following step is dependent on the completion of the previous one. With the ultimate goal of creating brand equity, the four steps are ordered from the bottom to the top as follows: brand identity, brand meaning, brand responses and brand relationships. All of these steps cater to specific fundamental questions that a strong brand should have the answers to. These steps form a so-called branding ladder, which requires proper responses to be able to be completed properly. (Keller 2013, 107-108.)

To form the actual pyramid of the model, the four steps listed above have been divided even further into six underlying brand building blocks. The top of the pyramid represents the brand resonance and the lower levels the other steps needed to take to achieve the top. The six brand building blocks are called from the bottom to the top as follows: salience, performance, imagery, judgements, feelings and resonance. The pyramid can be visualised as seen in figure 1 below. (Keller 2013, 107-108.)



Figure 1. The Brand Resonance Pyramid (Keller 2013, 108).

As can be seen from the figure above, the left side of the pyramid represents the more rational route to resonance, whereas the right side of the pyramid has a more emotional approach. It is generally thought that for a brand to fully be able to achieve brand resonance, it has to climb up both sides of the pyramid. (Keller 2013, 107.) In the analysis section of this thesis I will go through the phases of Donald Trump's presidential election campaign following this model closely. As a result, I will have a comprehensive idea of how Mr Trump's personal brand fits in this pyramid and which blocks his brand successfully fulfils.

3.1 Identity – Who are you?

First step of the pyramid concentrates on the salience of the brand and forces to figure out the brands identity. Salience measures how easily and often the brand is remembered in various situations and what kind of stimuli are necessary for it to come to mind. A brand with high salience is clearly categorised in the consumer's mind and provides the information in what kind of situations this brand is needed. (Keller 2013, 107-109.)

Breadth and depth of the brand awareness form the base for salience and in this way for the whole brand resonance pyramid. Depth of awareness means the likelihood and ease of the brand coming to mind in various situations. Consumers have a very deep awareness when they need very little stimulus to recall the brand. The breadth of brand awareness means the range and types of situations in which the brand comes to mind. To successfully complete the bottom level of the pyramid, both depth and breadth of brand awareness should be achieved. The brand should come to mind not only often, but also in the right context. (Keller 2013, 108-111.)

Achieving sufficient brand salience is a crucial first step in the brand building process, but by itself, salience is not enough. When more high involvement brands are in question, other factors like brand meaning and image come into play. When the brand faces questions involving these factors, it has moved to the next level of the brand resonance pyramid. (Keller 2013, 111.)

3.2 Meaning – What are you?

The next level of the brand resonance pyramid consists of two blocks: brand performance and brand imagery. These two blocks help a brand define its meaning to the world. This happens by creating meaningful associations in the consumers' minds with efficient brand communication, favourable customer experiences and with word-of-mouth between consumers. Brand imagery represents the more emotional approach to brand resonance whereas performance represents the more rational, experience-based approach. (Keller 2013, 111-112.)

Brand performance, in this model means the capability of the product to meet the functional needs of customers. Having a product that satisfies or even exceeds customer's expectations is a fundamental starting point for any kind of marketing. Good brand performance consists of a few central attributes such as product durability, reliability, features, services, design and of course price. (Keller 2013, 111-113.) Ensuring that the product a brand is marketing, is sound and performs well, is the cornerstone to any good branding. Analysing Donald Trump will surely provide an interesting case in this section as his personal brand is related to various different products from a large range of categories.

Brand imagery refers to the intangible aspects of the brand. With relevant brand imagery, the brand attempts to fulfil some of the consumer's psychological and social needs with strong, unique and favourable associations. Associations of brand imagery can answer some relevant questions for the consumer such as, who uses this brand and in what context, also what kind of personality traits could this brand have and where does this brand come from? All of these questions form an idea of the brand and humanise it in a sense that it can become relatable to the consumer. For brand imagery to become relatable, it has to correspond with the values and ideologies of the target group. (Keller 2013, 113-117.)

Strong brands generally have a collection of strong, unique and favourable associations linked to them. Whether these associations are linked to the performance of the brand or the imagery, they make the brand relevant in consumers' lives. In the next level of the pyramid it becomes necessary to review what kind of responses these associations evoke in the consumer. (Keller 2013, 116-117.)

3.3 Responses – What do I think or feel about you?

In the brand resonance model, brand responses have been divided into two blocks: brand judgements and brand feelings. These blocks look at how the consumers respond to the meanings and associations a brand has managed to gather. These two blocks form the second to last level of the pyramid, with just brand resonance left to be reached. (Keller 2013, 117.)

Brand judgements are generally formed by judging the more concrete aspects of the brand such as quality, credibility and superiority. How these aspects are perceived will determine whether the brand is even considered for purchase. This can be seen every time a consumer uses the perceived quality, credibility and superiority as a rationale for buying an expensive product, of which a cheaper option would be available. (Keller 2013, 117-118.) Trusting personal judgements can provide the consumer peace of mind, which a cheaper option would not do.

Brand feelings represent the right side of the pyramid, and as the name might suggest, the more emotional route to brand resonance. They are consumers' emotional responses to a brand and their intensities can vary a lot. (Keller 2013, 118-120.) Feelings function as a strong incentive to take action, which is why marketers work so hard to create emotional content for brand communication. It has been shown that all kinds of emotions drive engagement, even negative ones, if they serve a meaningful purpose. (Libert & Tynski 2013.)

Consumers use rational reasoning and judgements to convince themselves that their feelings and desires are justified. These two blocks back each other in a way that allows a workaround avoiding cognitive dissonance that would otherwise be inevitable. Ultimately what matters, when it comes to brand responses, is how positive the responses are and in what situations they arise. For positive responses to have a desired effect, they have to be easily related to the brand in question. (Keller 2013, 119-120.)

3.4 Relationships – What about you and me?

The top of the brand resonance pyramid houses brand resonance, the ultimate loyalty relationship a consumer can have with a brand. If a brand resonates with the

consumers, it can create a deep and intense psychological bond and activate the consumers to actively take part in the brand's story. The two dimensions of brand resonance are intensity and activity of the relationship, which can be further divided into four characteristic giveaways of a brand that resonates with its consumers. Behavioural loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community and active engagement among the consumers signal that the brand is in tune and resonates with its fan base. (Keller 2013, 120.)

The abovementioned characteristics are the ones I will be looking for when analysing Donald Trump's election campaign and brand later on in this thesis. For these characteristics to show up, the brand truly has to be a social phenomenon that engages people and becomes a concrete part of the target group's social identity. In these cases, the consumers become the brand's evangelists. They actively try to promote the brand to other target groups and in this way try to expand the brand community as wide as possible.

4 U.S. Presidential Election Process and a Brief History of the GOP

In this chapter, I will first go through the United States presidential election process, the complicated sequence of events that takes place every four years. After that, I will take a look at the Republican Party and its history to better understand the foundations on which Donald Trump built his presidential election campaign and the following success. My belief is that the recent events and history of the GOP has had a huge role in making the surprising twists of the 2016 elections possible and the ground fertile for a brand like Trump's.

4.1 U.S. Presidential Election System

The United States presidential election process is a very complex and many-phased system, which is carried out every four years to determine the next President of the United States. In this, more or less yearlong process the citizens of the United States vote twice: in the presidential primaries to determine each party's candidate and in the general election to finally decide which candidate should become the next president. The specific requirements to vote vary state by state, but in all states for a person to be

able to vote he or she has to be over 18 years old and hold a U.S. citizenship. (Presidential Election Process 2016; Register to Vote and Confirm or Change Registration 2016.)

The election process begins in the spring of the year before the actual election. At this time, the first presidential candidates announce their intentions to run for the office. The time before the primaries is a tumultuous period of speculation when people are waiting to get the first indications of which of the candidates will take the lead. To help people decide who to vote for, the candidates debate each other on largely publicised TV-debates. Various agencies also hold polls to analyse and predict the chances of each candidate. In February, on the year of the election, the primary elections begin with a caucus held in Iowa. (Presidential Election Process 2016; US election 2016: How to become the next president of the US 2016.)

4.1.1 Primary Election Process

The primary election process starts in February of the year of the election and goes on all the way until mid-June, when the parties announce their candidates for the general election in a national convention. To decide on a candidate, every state in turn holds either a primary or a caucus for all the participating parties. Both primaries and caucuses aim to choose the strongest candidate to represent the party in the general election. So, the primaries and caucuses have the same goal, just slightly different approaches. (Presidential Election Process 2016; CGP Grey 2012.)

Primaries are the more typical type of voting where citizens go in a booth and vote for a candidate in their own privacy. States can decide on what kind of primaries they want to run and so three general types have formed: closed primaries, semi-closed primaries and open primaries. If a state has a closed primary election system, then the voter has to be registered as a certain party's member to be allowed to cast a vote. In a semi-closed primary, voters who have registered as members of a certain party still have to vote in their party's primaries, but people with no party affiliation, often called independents, can choose the party they will vote for. In an open primary, all eligible voters can vote for which ever party they want to regardless of their party registration. (CGP Grey 2012.)

Caucuses are public gatherings in which voters gather into schools, churches and other public places all around the state on a specific night. In these gatherings voters hear speeches about candidates and discuss certain relevant topics. At the end of the meeting, people vote for a candidate of their choosing on the spot. Just like the primaries, caucuses can be open or closed or a hybrid between these two. (CGP Grey 2012; Presidential Election Process 2016.)

As mentioned before, the primary elections start with the caucus held in Iowa in February. From Iowa, the primary elections move through every state in its turn until every state has voted. (Presidential Election Process 2016.) The order of the states is an argued subject as the states that go first tend to have a greater say in the trends that indicate which candidate will become the early favourite or the front-runner. Many states have decided to hold their primary elections at the same time to avoid disputes. The biggest alliance is called Super Tuesday in which states like Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Massachusetts, Texas and many others vote on the same day. (CGP Grey 2012; Ross 2016; Super Tuesday 2016.)

The U.S. presidential primaries are an example of an indirect voting system. When a voter casts his or her vote, it doesn't go directly to the candidate, but to a group of people called delegates, that ultimately decide which candidate will win the state. (CGP Grey 2012.) This adds a layer of complexity to an already complicated system and can ultimately lead to a situation in which a candidate who has received less votes wins the state (LastWeekTonight 2016). People who are appointed as delegates are generally important party members, like political leaders of the state whom the party trusts. The candidate who gets the majority of the delegates wins the presidential primaries. At the end of the primaries the delegates take part in their party's national convention, which marks the end of the primary election process. In the convention, the party announces their presidential candidate and his running mate, the vice presidential candidate. (Masters 2016; Putnam 2015.)

4.1.2 The General Election

After the primary election process, the general election begins. In this election, U.S. citizens decide which parties' candidate becomes the next President of the United States. Even though the United States has more than two parties, typically only the Democrat and Republican nominees gain enough attention and popularity to be

As in the primaries, the votes people cast do not directly go to the candidate, but to a group of powerful people called the Electoral College. The Electoral College, consisting of 538 people, is the body that actually elects the president. For a candidate to win, he or she has to receive the majority of these electoral votes. The people in the Electoral College function as the representatives of each state and the population of the state roughly determines the number of electoral votes per state. (What is the Electoral College? 2016.) California, as the most populous state, has 55 electoral votes, which is more than any other state. If a candidate wins the state, he or she receives all of the electoral votes despite how close the results are. (Presidential Election Process 2016.) This kind of winner-takes-all way of counting the votes highlights the importance of the swing states.

The Inauguration Day of the new president is on the 20th of January at the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington DC. This day is a federal holiday around all of the United States. (Presidential Election Process 2016.) The Inauguration Day marks the end of the presidential election process and is the final phase of the democratic shift of power.

4.2 A Brief History of the GOP

The Grand Old Party, or the GOP, is a nickname of the Republican political party that is based on the early years of the party's existence. The Republican Party was formed in 1854 by the northern states to accelerate the banishing of slavery. The founding of the party was one of the first crucial steps in the path leading to the American Civil War in 1861-1865. The leader of the Republican Party at this time was one of the most respected presidents of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. He led the northern states to victory in the civil war and functioned as a key person in banishing slavery. This sequence of events led the Republican Party to its long and overpowered reign over the Democrats, which eventually resulted the party its nickname. (Kabaservice 2012, 35-40; Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 211-213.)

The party that is nowadays recognised as the House Republicans, formed its current ideologies later on in the 20th century. Conservatism, which is an ideology that encourages a moderate or sceptic attitude towards development and globalism, has come to mark the modern Republicans. This change took place slowly but made a relatively sharp turn to the extreme in the 1960s, when an extreme conservatist called Barry Goldwater won the more liberal Republican candidate in the primary elections.

Goldwater did not win the presidency, but his ideas seemed to have stuck. This newly found extreme conservatism would come to diminish the moderate Republican movement in the years to follow and lead to the kind of Republican Party we see today. (Kabaservice 2012, 25-30; Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 211-214.)

Barry Goldwater's idea has since been called anti-establishment conservatism, which is marked by suspicion towards government and the rich elite, believe in unregulated free markets, anti-communism and believe in a strong army. These ideas were strongly enforced by the Republican hero, Ronald Reagan during his presidency. Reagan delivered on many of his promises, which cemented his presidency's role as the golden age of America in the minds of the Republicans. Many of Reagan's promises were delivered with the help of large amounts of debt to the United States, but this was largely ignored due to the results that Reagan was able to produce. He managed to reduce taxes, increase the size of the army and produce economic growth. (Kabaservice 2012, 253-268, 937-951; Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 213-218.)

Ronald Reagan's presidency led the Republican Party to a spiral of exceedingly more far-right reaching promises. Every Republican candidate after Reagan has promised more and more extreme tax cuts, a bigger army, smaller government and more economic growth. Reagan's legacy was mostly a debt-riddled country that as a platform was not able to handle the promises of the new presidential candidates. This spiral gets worse every time the latest presidential candidate claims that the faults of the country are caused by the previous generation of not being extreme enough with its promises and actions. This kind of rule and ruin policy has lead the Republican party so far to the right that even Barry Goldwater has been accused of being a Republican in name only. (Kabaservice 2012, 1011-1014; Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 215-17.)

The tax cuts that were done during Reagan's presidency ended up benefitting the richest U.S. citizens the most. The idea behind this was that if the CEO's and other significant leaders and shareholders would benefit from the tax cuts, their wealth would eventually trickle down to the rest of the people. Mostly this was a false presumption and lead to the diminishing of the middle class and to the drastic widening of the wage gap. This trend has carried on to this day and the effects are becoming more and more noticeable. To distract their voter base, the Republican Party has diverted the attention of the voters to other matters such as abortion, immigration, gay marriage and other conservative ethical dilemmas. While the voters have been concentrating on these

matters, the Republican Party has carried on with its rich-favouring fiscal policies. The real talent they seem to have is formulating their intentions in such a way that the people suffering the most from their policies, have become the most active evangelists for the Republican cause. (Lofgren 2012, 121-145; Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 199-204.)

These historical aspects have been a fundamental part of paving the way for someone like Donald Trump to become the next President of the United States. Political polarisation, frustration and fear mongering has caused the voters to become more aggressive than ever. Voters want change that none of the previous leaders have been able to provide. Donald Trump represents change. He represents something that people have never seen in a presidential election before. (Moore 2016.)

The ground was definitely fertile for someone like Trump, but what was it about Trump or his brand that made his success possible? I am confident that not just anyone could have stepped up and joined the presidential race and act as Donald Trump did and still be so successful. Next I will take a closer look at the man behind the name.

5 Trump

Donald Trump is an American businessman, a reality TV-star, a playboy, a billionaire, but above all he is a dealmaker. He is a man who is well known around the world for his crude behaviour, ability to play the media and for his massive building projects. Most famous he is for his undertakings in Manhattan New York, in which he has built skyscrapers that house thousands of wealthy people in tremendously luxurious apartments. He has also built casinos, hotels, golf-courses and a university and as for his most recent project, he wants to build a wall on the border between the United States and Mexico. This he is going to do as the next President of the United States. In this chapter, I will take a look at the origins of Donald Trump. What kind of a path has lead this man with no political experience to becoming the next president of one the most powerful nations in the world.

5.1 Trumpf

Trump's family's story in the United States began in the late 19th century when Friedrich Trumpf came to the United States from a small German village to find a better life. Friedrich was Donald's grandfather and the family owned a winery in a small area nicknamed the German Tuscany. Friedrich arrived in New York in 1885 as Friedrich Trumpf, but his last name soon got Americanised to Trump, as was common for foreign names. He worked as a barber on Wall Street for a while, before leaving to Seattle and later on to Oregon to start hotels for sailors and gold miners. Friedrich's establishments had a dubious reputation throughout their existence. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 56-63.)

After sixteen years of traveling around the United States, Friedrich and his new wife Elizabeth Christ Trump wanted to move back to Germany. But problems quickly arose when the German officials accused Friedrich for being a draft dodger as he had never completed his military service. The couple did not get the permission to stay in Germany and had to move back to New York. This time they moved for good. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 60-64.)

Friedrich Trump died suddenly due to a flu epidemic at the age of 49. He left behind a considerable estate for his wife and young son, Fred Trump. Elizabeth made herself the head of Friedrich's real estate company and renamed it E. Trump & Son. Fred Trump, the boy who would later on become the father of the current President of the United States, took part in running the company at a considerably young age and was very keen on becoming a successor for his father's legacy. When only seventeen years old, Fred had already managed the construction of one home and had new projects in the pipelines, which he would fund with the profits from the previous project. He bought land from Queens and from Brooklyn, which were both still mostly sparsely populated outskirts around Manhattan. Luckily for Fred Trump, these outskirts' population almost doubled in the following years, which made his investments extremely fruitful. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 67-71.)

Fred Trump met his future wife, Mary Anne MacLeod at a party in 1935 and they got married soon after. Mary Anne came from a small village on an island in front of Scotland, which she visited often before she met Fred Trump. After the wedding and the honeymoon Fred went back on concentrating on his business, which consumed most of his waking hours. The years preceding and during The Second World War

proved to be very profitable, which established him as not just a great businessman, but also a great showman. Meanwhile Mary Anne was taking care of the five children they had, of which Donald John Trump was the second youngest. He was born on June 14th, 1946, less than a year after the end of The Second World War. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 82-89.)

5.2 Donald J. Trump

As a child, Donald Trump was adventurous and brave. On the weekends he would often take the train to Manhattan with his best friend where they would eat hot dogs and buy interesting things from street vendors. They never asked for their parents' permission to go, which made the trips even more exciting. The Trumps lived in Queens at the time in one of the houses built by Fred Trump. The house was the largest and most luxurious in the area and was the point of envy for the whole neighbourhood. The post-war Manhattan was bustling with life and was heralded as the capital of the world. The glamour and danger of Manhattan interested young Donald and left an impression on him, which would never fade. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 90-93.)

Donald was born into wealth and luxury. He was accustomed to things like chauffeurs, limousines, colour televisions, maids and personal chefs from a very early age. He also got used to suits and ties when he was young, as it was often mandatory to wear a school uniform in the private schools he attended. At school, he was a mischievous prankster that liked to stir things up. He would also be known for his constant need for attention and for his compulsive need to win. These characteristics were especially clear when young Donald was playing sports. He loved baseball and was very talented in it, but he never took the games lightly. It was always about winning, even if it sometimes included a bit of cheating. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 91-101; Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 33-34.)

Fred Trump was a hardworking man and he ran a very strict household with his wife. He wanted to teach his children the value of hard work from an early age. He also instilled on his children his ideals of ambition, frugality and self-discipline. Fred often told his children to remember to be killers, by which he meant the capitalistic way of surviving through ruthless competition. Fred Trump's lessons made a lot of sense to young Donald, which lead him to see the world consisting purely out of winners and losers. The Trump children competed among each other for the attention of their father

who was working all the time. Donald, who had always been very competitive, made competing his way of life. This pleased Fred Trump and Donald soon became a common sight in the construction sites with his father. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 100-103; Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 32-34.)

Later on, Donald would have been eager to start working for his father, but his father wanted him to get the best possible education, which lead him to the prestigious Wharton School of Finance and Commerce. It took Donald a few tries to get in as his grades were not sufficiently good. In school Donald was popular, even though he didn't have close friends. He was also known to be quite the ladies' man. Both of these aspects would stay true also later on in his life. (Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 40-42.)

5.3 Businessman Donald Trump

After graduating from Wharton's, Donald joined his father with his business. Fred had just built the largest rental complex in Brooklyn at the time and business was going well. When Donald was just 25 years old, he was made the president of his father's company, while Fred became a chairman of the board. Renting thousands of apartments to working class people proved to be a rough job and things weren't made any easier by the lawsuits the company was getting. As Fred's company had grown, more and more people began to question the ways he had made all of his money and how he rented the apartments. Donald and Fred faced lawsuits for exploiting government housing programs and for racial discrimination. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 139-150.)



Donald and Fred Trump at a large housing complex called Trump Village in 1973 (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 541).

Donald never really enjoyed selling and renting apartments for the working class. He thought the profit margins were low and he wanted to do something bigger and flashier. This is when he started eyeing at Manhattan. It was the early 70s and New York was nearly bankrupt when Donald bought his first apartment there. He was eagerly making his way to the better circles of the city when he met a notorious lawyer called Roy Cohn. Cohn would have a great influence on Donald and with the beginning of his career in Manhattan. He helped Fred and Donald win many lawsuits their company was facing at the time and he confirmed to Donald his father's teaching: if you want to be a winner, you have to be ruthless. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 159-160, 168-175.)

Donald Trump's first big project was a bankrupt hotel called the Commodore. The hotel and the whole area around the New York Central Station, near to which the hotel was located, was in a very bad way. Donald won the rights to buy the hotel in no time, as the mayor of New York happened to be a good friend of his father. With the rights from the city and a large loan that was backed by his father, he began to come up with the plans to renovate the hotel. Donald's plan was risky as he had no experience in the

hotel business and Manhattan was nearly ruined economically. He was in dire need of assistance in form of an experienced partner, and more loan and some tax breaks from the city. This is the time when Donald got to really use his deal making and branding skills, for which he would later be known for. To convince everyone of his plans, he very successfully branded the project with ideas of what the hotel would be like. To back these mental images up, he hired a famous architect to take care of the project. Donald's branding campaign was a success and he soon got the tax breaks, loans and partnerships he had needed. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 188-190, 195-200; Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 56-60.)

With the Commodore project, Donald Trump had shown nearly all of the characteristics he would possess and use later on in his career. The Commodore opened in 1980 and was a huge success. Named as the Grand Hyatt due to his partnership with the large hotel chain, the hotel produced 30 million dollars in profits in its first year. Donald had been a cunning and ruthless business partner during the project. For example, he knew that people wanted to stay in as high a floor as possible, so he started the numbering of the floors at fourteen. He has used the same trick in his other projects as well. Another trick he used was something he himself called truthful hyperbole, which meant the exaggeration of certain aspects to create interest and attention. (Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 56-64; Trump & Schwartz 1987, 94-96.)

The truthful hyperbole is something he would definitely use later on as well, especially to control the media. He knew exactly how to manipulate the reporters to have them tell the story he wanted out. The Commodore project and the media handling skills that it taught Donald Trump, was the actual beginning of his own brand that he would come to nurture throughout the years. He realised that with the right kind of an image he could ensure that his future projects would be successful, just like the Commodore. He began to cultivate an image of himself through all of the media outlets he had influence on. The image he cultivated, that would eventually develop into his brand, was a truthful hyperbole in almost every aspect. It was an exaggerated set of associations about himself that he would imprint on the minds of people around the world. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 200-205.)

At the end of the 70s, just when The Commodore re-opened as The Grand Hyatt, New York started to boom again. Property values rose and Trump was rewarded for his trust in the island of Manhattan. In 1978 he had negotiated a deal to buy what he thought to

be the best property in the world. In this place, he would construct the epitome of his brand, Trump Tower. Trump Tower was going to be a skyscraper full of luxurious apartments, housing some of the wealthiest people in the world. To promote the apartments, Trump leaked information to the media that the newlywed Prince Charles and Princess Diane were looking to buy an apartment from Trump Tower. There are no records of such intentions. Donald Trump had also come up with an alter ego called John Baron as whom he would give out phone interviews to praise himself and the project. This all worked extremely well and every apartment was sold in no time. Trump himself also moved to the top floor of Trump Tower, along with celebrities like Steven Spielberg, Michael Jackson, Johnny Carson and other famous and wealthy people. Trump Tower also became the headquarters of the Trump Organization. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 226, 230-255; Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 74-87.) Trump was blurring the line between The Trump Organization and himself. Before Trump Tower, Donald had been somewhat famous in New York and in the US, but The Trump Tower made him and his name famous around the world.



Donald Trump at the Trump Tower construction site (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 544).

Donald Trump's later life carried on bearing much resemblance to the beginning of his career. New projects and continuous public relations efforts let him cultivate his lifestyle and brand to audiences around the world. In 1990, he even got to be on the cover of Playboy with a Playmate brushing against him. After Trump Tower, Donald moved on to casinos in Atlantic City, which was another deteriorated destination that Trump was hoping to uplift. Trump was on the top of the world at the time. In a sense, he had moved from the building business to selling images. Selling the rights to the Trump-name had become a large part of his business. Things soon went awry when one of his casinos was facing financial difficulties. This revealed the huge amounts of debt that Trump had gathered from his projects. A chain of bankruptcies ensued and Donald Trump faced the first real setback of his career. But again, he proved his skills as the master dealmaker he had always said he was and the banks bailed him out and let him continue fixing the problems with his business. This would not be the last episode of this sort in Trump's career. In fact, he would face a similar situation three times in later years, which he would negotiate his way out of, just like this one. He still proved to be the ruthless businessman his father had taught him to be. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 263-267; Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 116-127.)

Building hotels, casinos and apartments were not the only businesses Donald Trump had. He had expanded his brand to cover a university, an airline, golf-courses, clothing lines, a beauty pageant, steaks, vodka and the list goes on. He had also given his name to a bestseller book called *The Art of the Deal* in which he explains the way he makes deals in his own questionable ways. All of these endeavours relied greatly on his brand that he had carefully refined throughout the years. One of his most famous feats was a TV-show called *The Apprentice*, which finally cemented the idea of him as a ruthless but clever businessman that could make anything happen. He got the weekly prime-time slots to preach the world about his successes and amazing deals. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 491-499; Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 139-152.) *The Apprentice* was a breakthrough for the Trump-brand and provided truly global brand recognition. Trump had become an entertainer with a global audience.



Contestants and Trump in a promo picture for the *Celebrity Apprentice* (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 547).

Trump's brand building has been in jeopardy a few times during his career. His four bankruptcies have been crises of his brand just as much as crises of his wealth. Trump's three marriages have also posed threats to his brand. The biggest one being an affair with a woman called Marla Maples, while he was still married to his first wife Ivana Trump. Today Donald Trump is married to his third wife, a Slovenian model and the future First Lady of the United States, Melania Knauss, now Melania Trump. Donald Trump has five children from his marriages and they are all closely involved in The Trump Organization. (Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 91-109.) They have become an important part of the Trump brand and played an important role in humanising their father during his presidential campaign.

5.4 The Man Behind the Name

Donald Trump is an extremely curious character, who is surrounded by a shroud of mystery. Very little is actually known about his personal life and real persona. Even

though he seemingly enjoys being in the spotlight and deliberately seeks media attention, he very effectively shows only one side of himself. This has led some people to question what he is really like when no one is watching. Some crumbs of information have leaked and they can offer some insight to the man behind the name, like that he does not drink alcohol or that he is somewhat of a germaphobe and does not like to shake people's hands. He is also said to be a workaholic just like his father and he does not seem to have any or only a few people he considers as close friends. He seems to be in his comfort zone every time when the cameras are pointing at him and he gets to be the centre of the attention. (Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 153-159.) Ultimately he seems to be a person with a very black-and-white view of the world and a strong belief in the populist agenda. He knows that people listen to things that they want to hear and if you want attention, you have to say things as people want to hear them. He can manipulate people with his behaviour that can sometimes be cruel and offensive and sometimes extremely friendly and welcoming (Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 154). In the end, this leaves us guessing what kind of a person he really is.

It is said that Donald Trump can fill up any room with his charismatic presence (Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 154). I got to experience this personally when I was visiting New York a couple of years before the election of 2016. I happened to walk into the atrium of Trump Tower when Donald Trump was there. Even though the atrium was bustling with people and all kinds of distractions, he was the first thing I saw there and he really did electrify the room with his presence. When I first heard that he was running for president, I recalled that moment, and as ridiculous it seemed at the time, it actually felt somehow suitable that a man with a presence like that could do it. Especially in the United States, in the country that has been the driving force behind the way we see celebrities and movie stars in the world today. In my opinion, Donald Trump is just offspring of that culture that is finally taking over the country by storm.

6 Implementation of the Analysis

The following analysis is a case study of Donald Trump's brand's role in the presidential election of 2016. Following the steps of the brand resonance pyramid by Kevin Lane Keller, this analysis aims to identify the path the Trump brand took to reach the White House and what elements of the brand and context were most impactful. The analysis was conducted as a combination of qualitative and quantitative research

methods based on numerous media and literature sources. Relying closely on professional political journalists' analysis about the subject and the recorded interviews of Trump's supporters, provided a comprehensive view into the lives and opinions of the people involved in the election. Main sources from which the information in this analysis was gathered are reputable media sources such as The Washington Post, The Atlantic, Politico, The New York Times, Vox and Politifact. As for literature sources, *Trump Revealed* by Michael Kranish and Marc Fisher and *Trump* by Saska Saarikoski and Laura Saarikoski provided many of the facts and ideas based on which the results of the analysis were concluded.

The gathering and analysing of sources was a continuous process during the production of this thesis. A circular model was used for analysing the sources and iterating the conclusions throughout the election. This required continuous monitoring of the chosen sources and writing down of ideas and conclusions based on them. As new information came to light, these conclusions and predictions were tested based on how well they were supported by the new information and developed situation. At this point, the conclusions would most often be iterated and the process would start over again. Going through this model dozens of times during this process gives me confidence that the conclusions that I reached are correct to the current knowledge of the events. The same kind of circular iteration approach is used in my work as an insight manager and data-analyst at a large marketing agency operating in Helsinki. This model has proven to be a great way to analyse for example, continuously developing trends and pinpointing relevant elements in content analysis. As a conclusion, this model especially has merit analysing events that are still happening during the analysis. The method is continuously being utilised by clients in weekly content optimisation reporting and trend following and predicting. This method forces the analyst to follow the events closely and make conclusions based on different levels of the situation. This ensures a deep and broad understanding of the events that form through multiple rounds of iteration and reiteration throughout the analysis process.

The bulk of this analysis was conducted in between November 2016 and January 2017 with some iterations added later on in the spring. The source material was gathered throughout the election period starting roughly from March of 2016 and going on until the end of January 2017. Writing of this analysis took place during the final part of the general election and during the immediate aftermath. This gives the analysis a special time dimension, which provides an interesting look into the events as they were

unfolding. The currency of the analysis also poses its biggest threat. The source material used was written by people analysing the situation based on the prevailing knowledge and as new unexpected aspects of the 2016 elections come to light, some views of the course of events might change.

7 Analysis

On June 16th 2015 hundreds of people had gathered to the atrium of Trump Tower to hear an announcement. Even though nothing official had been said about the contents of the announcement, many of the people there must have been guessing quite accurately what was about to happen. Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka took the speaker's booth as Neil Young's *Rocking in the Free World* played in the background. She briefly and appraisingly introduced her father, who then ascended to the atrium on the golden escalator of Trump Tower. (Saarikoski & Saarikoski 2016, 141-143.)

On that day Donald Trump announced his candidacy for the presidency of the United States. He did this during a rambling speech that functioned as a clear indicator of what his campaign would be like for the following eighteen months. He began the speech by revealing the communication angle that would come to define the campaign.

"Our country is in serious trouble. We don't have victories anymore. We used to have victories, but we don't have them. When was the last time anybody saw us beating, let's say, China in a trade deal? They kill us. I beat China all the time. All the time." (Trump 2016.)

During the speech, he also insulted the Mexican people, other presidential candidates and the sitting president. He pinpointed and deliberately exaggerated existing problems and brought them up like no politician had ever done before. (Diamond 2015.) Donald Trump presented himself as the saviour of a crumbling country that is getting humiliated in a global scale and with this, he struck gold.

In this chapter I will analyse Donald Trump's brand and its role in the results of the 2016 presidential election. I will do this by comparing the events of the election and facts from Donald Trump's history to the brand resonance pyramid model presented in chapter 3 of this paper. I will go through the six steps of the pyramid level by level from

the bottom to the top and analyse the relevant elements that in this case form the blocks of the pyramid. Ultimately the analysis will result in a comprehensive view of the Trump brand's role in making him the next President of the United States and reveal the path the brand took based on the brand resonance model.

7.1 Salience

This first chapter of the analysis focuses on pinpointing the key elements that have contributed to the salience of the Trump brand during the elections. For the salience level of the brand resonance pyramid to be fulfilled the Trump brand has to be easily recognisable and identifiable by the voters in various situations. Breadth and depth of the brand, by which is meant the range of situations in which the brand comes to mind and the ease it does so, are the dimensions to be identified. In other words, this chapter will find out whether the Trump brand has a clear identity.

During the election of 2016, Donald Trump was everywhere. In September 2016, Trumps media coverage was calculated as being worth of 2 billion dollars. That compared to Hillary Clinton's 746 million dollars worth of media coverage, just shows what kind of media saturation Trump got marinated in. This also shows how it was not hard to imagine how Trump suddenly was the top-of-the mind name for the Republican candidacy or even for the presidency. (Lafrance 2016.) This also fits perfectly into Donald Trump's own media strategy and philosophy about the press. He shared the following insight on media in *The Art of The Deal*:

"One thing I've learned about the press is that they're always hungry for a good story, and the more sensational the better. It's in the nature of the job, and I understand that. The point is that if you are a little different, or a little outrageous, or if you do things that are bold or controversial, the press is going to write about you." (Trump & Schwartz 1987, 93.)

In other words, you just have to stand out to be written about. In the case of the 2016 elections, standing out ultimately wasn't that hard to do. Trump was facing professional politicians who played by a set of unwritten rules that Trump just blatantly broke. He tried out a set of differentiating points by being his usual self and apparently, people saw it as a fresh change of pace. Later on in the *Art of the Deal* Trump goes on to state that even a personally insulting or hurtful story written about you can be extremely

good for your brand and for your business. (Trump & Schwartz 1987, 94.) This definitely seemed to be the case in the 2016 elections as the number of negatively toned posts about Trump clearly outnumber the positive ones (see figure 3). At the best, negative coverage outnumbered the positive 2-to-1 and during the worst weeks, positive coverage was outnumbered 10-1. (Patterson 2016.)

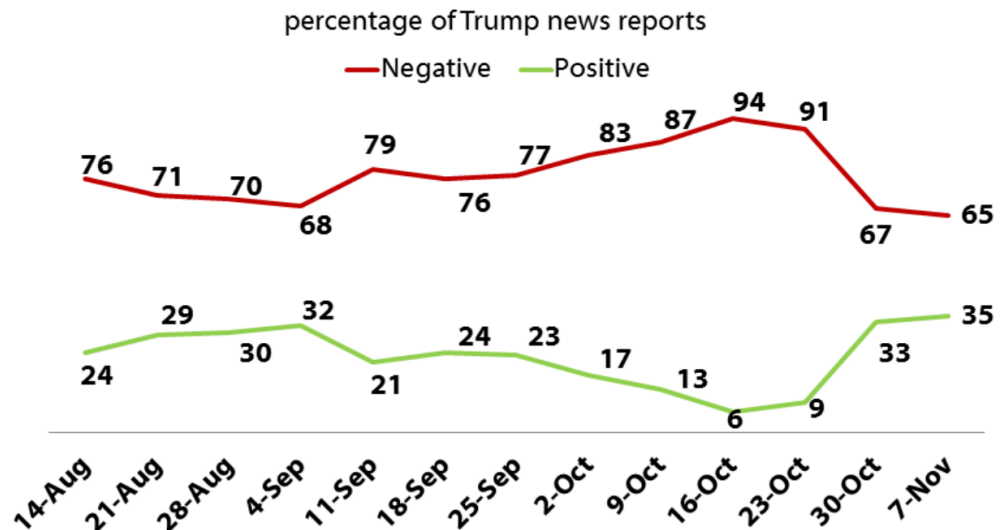


Figure 3. Tone of Trump's Coverage, by Week (Patterson 2016).

Trump's media strategy was simple. Every time the attention of the media was on something else, he quickly said or did something that the media couldn't resist. He would often do this by just saying something sensational or by insulting someone. This has resulted in a long list of people who have been personally insulted by the soon-to-be president, which is somewhat unheard of. Some of these cases were almost too extreme even for Trump. Such was the case when the Muslim American parents of a deceased U.S. gold star Iraq veteran, criticized Trump's proposed ban on Muslim immigration. Trump responded to this in his usual way of attacking directly at his critics. The incident was condemned throughout the party lines and resulted in a huge media circus that lasted for almost a week. The consensus was that this time Trump had gone too far. But obviously, that wasn't the case as this scandal, too, took its place on the long list of over-the-top, personal feuds that Trump had amassed during his campaign. (Burns 2016.) And again, everyone was talking about Trump. The man who seems to be immune to the effects of negative press.

By clamouring for media's attention, Trump clearly reveals that he identifies the importance of salience and especially the depth of the brand. He looks to be on everyone's mind at all times by being as visible as possible. By getting the media's undivided attention Trump got to deepen the awareness of his candidacy and make it seem more normal. This normalisation was necessary for Trump because he was representing something new. He was representing an idea of how politics should be run as a ruthless business. Also, Trump's ruthless media strategy and disregard for negative press strongly indicate that he values attention in general more than sentiment. This means that he really believes that bad press can be good for you.

"But from a pure business point of view, the benefits of being written about have far outweighed the drawbacks. It's really quite simple." (Trump & Schwartz 1987, 62.)

Throughout his campaign, Trump has used social media as his personal communication line to reach a great deal of people. With over 17 million followers around the world, Trump's Twitter account has proved to be one of the most effective ways for him to get his voice heard in every situation. His account offers real-time entertainment around the clock. And with nearly 35 000 tweets, and each one having the possibility of becoming the starting point for the next scandal, it is no wonder why his Twitter account is in the top 100 most followed accounts in the world. (Twitter Counter 2016.) The unmoderated usage of social media on Trump's part has enforced the image of him being authentic and down to earth. This is one of his greatest differentiating points to the other candidates. Trump's approach to everything he says has a very impulsive feel to it, which offers a completely opposite approach compared to the other candidates' dry and restrained communication.



Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump

Wow, Jeb Bush, whose campaign is a total disaster, had to bring in mommy to take a slap at me. Not nice!



Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump

I just realized that if you listen to Carly Fiorina for more than ten minutes straight, you develop a massive headache. She has zero chance!



Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump

I would like to wish everyone, including all haters and losers (of which, sadly, there are many) a truly happy and enjoyable Memorial Day!

Examples of Trump's tweets (Trump Twitter Archive 2017).

Twitter has been an effective tool for developing the breadth of the Trump brand. With Twitter, he got to take part in a very wide range of situations with an audience that was ready to react. This audience also included the media. With rough comments like the ones pictured above, Trump nurtured the attention of the audience. He kept everyone on their toes waiting for the next tweet to come out, making him the top-of-mind brand for a large global audience.

Even before the election, Trump's brand already had as wide a name recognition as a presidential candidate could hope for. His life as a celebrity business mogul has made sure that the name Trump had both breadth and depth in the voters' minds. Depth of the Trump brand has come as a result of continuous exposure in the media during a time period lasting many decades. During this time, Trump gave a persona to his brand that has made it easily recognisable and identifiable. Trump's reality TV-show, *The Apprentice*, was one of the greatest opportunities to present this persona systematically every week to people around the world. This platform also allowed

Trump to do this in a setting that seemed real and authentic, but actually was very controlled and scripted. He could bring out the personality traits people wanted to see in him in situations that he was in control of. The Apprentice also offered a perfect platform to showcase all of Trump's various endeavours throughout the years, this way developing the already existing breadth of the brand. Amongst all of the Trump jets, casinos and other additional Trump-products, the show allowed Trump to present his way of life as an achievement of his genius. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 336-338.) Ultimately The Apprentice functioned almost as a brand mood board, compiling all of the different elements of the brand and presenting them in a weekly bite-sized collection of staged situations. At the same time the show coincidentally primed the Trump brand for the 2016 presidential elections. The creator of the the Apprentice. Mark Burnett once stated that without The Apprentice, Trump couldn't run for the presidency (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 342).

It is safe to say that the Trump brand had all the salience it needed to be the top-of – the mind brand in this election. With his ruthless media strategy and well-established persona, Trump stood out easily from the crowd of candidates and successfully extended his brand's breadth to cover the new territory he was entering as a politician.



Salience

- Trump's exceptional visibility in the media during the election and long public history ensured the brand salience.
- Trump's ruthless media strategy that consisted of stealing the spotlight with scandalous comments gave him the media attention he needed.
- Competitors' likeness to each other gave Trump a platform to easily stand out.

7.2 Performance and Imagery

Performance and imagery form the next level of the brand resonance pyramid. These two blocks are meant to define the meaning of the Trump brand to the consumers. Performance should represent the functional needs of the consumer and the extent to which the brand satisfies them. Performance represents the functional road to brand resonance as it is very much based on previous experiences with the brand. Imagery on the other hand, is formed by the associations and intangible and extrinsic properties of the brand such as, heritage, personality and values. The main difference to performance is that the brand's imagery can be affected directly or indirectly. This means that the imagery related to the brand can be formed by direct contact with the brand or by indirect means such as word of mouth or advertising. In the end, what matters is the strength, uniqueness and favourability of these associations and intangible properties. (Keller 2013, 111-116.) This chapter will look into how well the Trump brand fulfils the criteria of these two blocks of the brand resonance pyramid.

Throughout the 2016 elections people have been doubting Trump's qualification to be the President of the United States. These doubts are not without any merit since Donald Trump will be the first President in the history of the United States to begin his presidency without having ever held elected office or without having any military background. To compare, Trump's predecessors moved into the White House with an average of 13 years of experience in public office and 5,6 years in the military. (Crockett 2016.) Comparing this to Donald Trump's zero years on both accounts, makes him without a doubt the most inexperienced president the people of the United States have ever elected.

Trump's experience and qualifications come solely from the world of business and deal-making. His highly branded and publicised performance in this area has become the metric that the voters use to justify Trump's capability to run the nation. This kind of by proxy -thinking has allowed for the criteria of the performance block of the pyramid to be seemingly fulfilled, even though the required performance is actually missing completely. The association of Trump as a successful business person gives the voters confidence that he will be successful in being a president as well.

"He is not a dummy, like everyone seems to think. You don't make a billion dollars by being an idiot. So... I think he is smart enough to run the country."

(Richard Matkey from New Hampshire 2016.)

This assumption has not been faltered even by the fact that Trump has filed for bankruptcy four times in the past 25 years, mainly due to bad business decisions and extreme amounts of debt (Carroll & Youngman 2015). These bankruptcies were brought up during a debate by Carly Fiorina, another Republican presidential candidate during the primary elections.

"You know, there are a lot of us Americans who believe that we are going to have trouble someday paying back the interest on our debt because politicians have run up mountains of debt using other people's money. That is in fact precisely the way you ran your casinos. You ran up mountains of debt, as well as losses, using other people's money, and you were forced to file for bankruptcy not once, not twice, four times."

(Fiorina 2015.)

Even though a bankruptcy can be a sound business decision, it certainly does not communicate a preferable message of your business skills. Especially if the businesses that go bankrupt are clearly linked to your name. Such was the case of Trump's four bankruptcies. First one to go was The Trump Taj Mahal in 1991, next one was Trump Plaza Hotel in 1992, third one to fall was Trump Hotels and Casinos Resort in 2004 and finally went Trump Entertainment Resorts in 2009. (Carroll & Youngman 2015.) Surely these failures should have some kind of an effect on the image of him being a brilliant businessman and undermine his presidential campaign. But looking at the results of the election, these failures did not seem to have any visible impact on the campaign and certainly not enough to change the outcome of the election. In fact, Trump's favourability rose towards the end of the election (Huffington Post 2017). This clearly hints that the path to brand resonance did not rely too heavily on the actual performance of the Trump brand, but on the imagery and associations that Trump has managed to link to his name during the past decades.

The Trump brand's performance block is a tricky topic to analyse since he has no performance in the field of politics to base expectations on. Usually this block's criteria is fulfilled with various testimonies of customers' experiences with the brand backed up by opinions about the products price, reliability, durability and style or design (Keller

2013, 111-113). These very concrete and functional aspects of the brand are lacking entirely. Trump has offered very few accessible touchpoints with his brand except for his reality TV-show the Apprentice and the media attention he has been gathering. Realising the weakness of the performance block reveals an odd contrast in Trump's campaign strategy as his promises and claims are highly functional. Promises like building a border wall, bringing back manufacturing jobs and destroying ISIS are promises that require strong performance to be able to keep. (Qiu 2016.) But a quick look at Trump's history reveals that these promises are quite certainly hyperboles, truth-related exaggerations, that are masked as absolute truths by Trump's extreme confidence. He is selling an image of these solutions without any experience or idea of how to make them a reality. Trump just relies on his skills to negotiate his way out of any situation like he has done in his past projects. Keller stresses the importance of the performance block in the resonance pyramid by noting that most often the brands with a clear functional advantage are the strongest (Keller 2013, 113). This means that the Trump brand will be facing trouble as soon as the time comes for him to make good on his promises.

Even though Trump built his reputation by selling real estate, his main product was his name and everything tied to it. This became especially apparent in the years before and during The Apprentice when he started to broaden the product portfolio that operated under the Trump name. He wanted Trump to become a household brand throughout the world and he started paying special attention to this during the turn of the century. His big idea was to sell licenses for his name for a hefty price. This way the Trump-name was suddenly on everything with minimal risk to Trump himself. This strategy resulted in a varied portfolio of luxury products, such as a Trump branded clothing line, eyeglasses, water, steaks, furniture and even fragrances. All of the Trump branded products were designed to communicate a few certain key associations that Trump wanted his name to be linked to. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 346-371.) As an example, a few of the key associations were even used as the names for his fragrance's, Success and Empire (Trump Organization 2017). These key associations were meant to capture the essence of the Trump brand. This kind of an approach let Trump focus on the extrinsic and abstract properties of his brand, which was preferable since keeping up appearances was easier and cheaper for him than actually performing and coming up with the products himself. Donald Trump stuck to his strengths, which were handling media and developing his image.

Trump had very much built a luxury brand of himself. And as all luxury brands, he aimed for a balance of accessibility and exclusivity that would lead the brand to an optimal situation in which everybody wants to be a part of your brand, but not everyone can afford it. Luxury brands are one of the purest examples of branding since they are so dependent on the unique and favourable associations linked to them. It is crucial for a luxury brand to maintain an image of prestige and superiority to function properly. (Keller 2013, 114.) This is something that Trump seems understands very well. He has honed the imagery of his brand with almost an artistic touch. He has surrounded himself with all of the symbols of a wealthy lifestyle, such as private jets, helicopters, penthouse apartments, luxury yachts and of course beautiful women. With these symbols, he has created an image of himself as the archetype of American success. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 242-245.) This combined with his ruthless attitude has successfully made him the role-model of a typical blue collar American.



Trump as the epitome of success. (Google Image Search 2017).

On the other hand, the imagery of the Trump brand has been boosted by the relatability of the brand. Trump has successfully separated himself from the other super rich billionaires that are so hated by the working class of America. Even though the differences between the other billionaires and Trump are not as large as might seem, Trump has effectively positioned himself as an opponent to the rich elitists. This he has

done mostly by linking himself to brands like the Miss America Beauty Pageant and the professional wrestling brand, Wrestlemania, which are both especially popular among blue collar Americans. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 404-408.) By being a part of these brands, Trump has proven to the people that he is able to speak the language of the average American. This combined with the fact that the whole Trump brand is embodied by a single, easily identifiable person, has resulted in a combination that is very relatable and likeable to a large audience hungry for change. This relatability of the Trump brand was especially highlighted by Michael Kranish and Marc Fisher in *Trump Revealed*. As the scriptwriter of Trump's appearances in Wrestlemania, Court Bauer cleverly put it in an interview for the book, "Donald talks blue collar, but he has the world." (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 407.) This aspirational image of him as something relatable yet successful must have been something completely new for many.

During his presidential campaign, Trump stayed true to his persona. He effectively utilised the strong and unique associations that separated him from the other candidates, who were all career politicians and compared to Trump, all alike. He took the momentum for his campaign from the history and heritage of his brand, which he had carefully developed for the past decades. This became apparent instantly after his announcement to run for the presidency, which led to a debate of whether he could be presidential enough for such a high office and powerful position. Despite Trump's own assurances that he will become presidential once he takes office, it does not seem likely that he is going to willingly abandon his persona and the rich imagery linked to it. This is mainly because Trump must know that the American people voted for him because of who he is. (Marcus 2016.) By not being recognisably presidential or a typical politician, Trump strengthened his unique differentiating points. This is yet again a great example of how well Trump knew his target audiences. He realised the dissatisfaction towards the current government and fully utilised it for his own gain.

"Finally we are getting someone who is not a politician!" (BBC News 2016.)

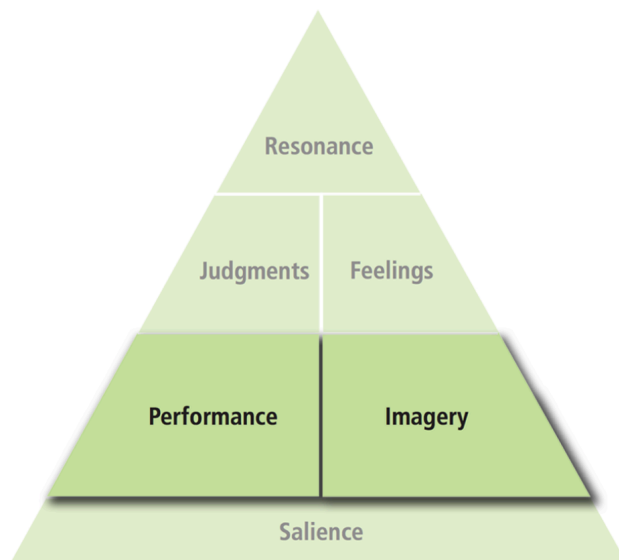
*"Washington is terribly broken and I believe he is the only man who can fix it."
(BBC News 2016.)*

*"Everybody is so angry with the Democrats and so angry with the Republicans, that's why he's got the support he's got. He's the screw you Washington vote, that's all he is."
(BBC News 2016.)*

Some changes in his behaviour might happen in time, but my belief is that he is going to stay true to his persona also during the period of his presidency. Some have even speculated that Donald Trump just is not capable of changing his persona and imagery. Vox's Editor-in chief Ezra Klein has expressed his belief in Trump's incapability of changing his persona by stating the following: "For Donald Trump, being this brash, confident egotist, projecting this kind of intense charisma and power hunger, it's not just personality it's ideology." (Klein 2016). With this statement he expressed his worry of Trump not being just a populist, but an ideologist. Despite the nuance differences of these approaches, the outcome is the same. Being who he is has worked way too well for Trump for him to even want to alter his personality or image.

Everything indicates that the strength, uniqueness and favourability of the Trump brand's imagery is very strong among the supporters. The colourful history of the Trump brand offers a unique set of associations that most voters have never identified in a politician, which provided Trump a unique position to differentiate himself like none of the other candidates could. Trump has built his imagery by relying heavily on the personality, values, history and heritage aspects of his brand. This he has done by exposing himself to his audiences only in situations that allow him to have full control, whether it was on a reality TV-show or an interview for a reporter that Trump has in his pocket. In these situations, Trump presented himself as a supremely confident and competent leader that conveys authority and requires and gets immediate results. (Kranish & Fisher 2016, 340-342.) By building and developing this imagery, Trump has succeeded in creating strong enough associations of himself as the embodiment of success that even the lack of performance is not enough to make his supporters doubt his extraordinary promises.

This second level of the brand resonance pyramid looked at the meaning of the brand and on what kind of a foundation the brand functions performance- and imagery-wise. It is clear that the Trump brand has a rich and vivid imagery linked to it mainly due to the colourful heritage and persona of the person that embodies it. In fact, it seems that the imagery is so strong that it helps to cover up the deficiencies of the actual performance of the brand that has been tarnished on multiple occasions in recent history. The third level of the brand resonance pyramid takes a look at the judgements and feelings that the people have about the brand.



Performance & Imagery

- Trump's performance is purely evaluated based on his businesses, which have a questionable reputation.
- Systematic development of brand associations throughout the decades has given the Trump brand an identifiable imagery.
- Strong and vivid imagery and associations help to hide the deficiencies of the performance.

7.3 Judgements and Feelings

Brand judgements and feelings form the second-to-last level of the pyramid with just the resonance above. Brand judgements are consumer's opinions about the brand formed by combining the lower levels of the resonance pyramid. The judgements are formed by the more concrete aspects of the brand such as perception of quality, credibility and superiority. Feelings are the consumer's emotional responses to the brand. Brand feelings describe how the brand affects the consumer's feelings about themselves and their relation to others. These feelings are often described with their intensity and positivity or negativity. (Keller 2013, 117-120.) This chapter will look into how the brand judgements and feelings towards the Trump brand have been formed and what elements have had the most impactful effect.

Before looking at the judgements and feelings a Trump voter might have towards the brand, we first have to find out what a typical Trump voter is like and what he or she hopes to achieve. When looking at voter data from the election a few common factors between the voters become apparent. The clear majority of Trump supporters consist of white people without higher education degrees, with minorities taking up their namesake portion of the whole (see figure 4).

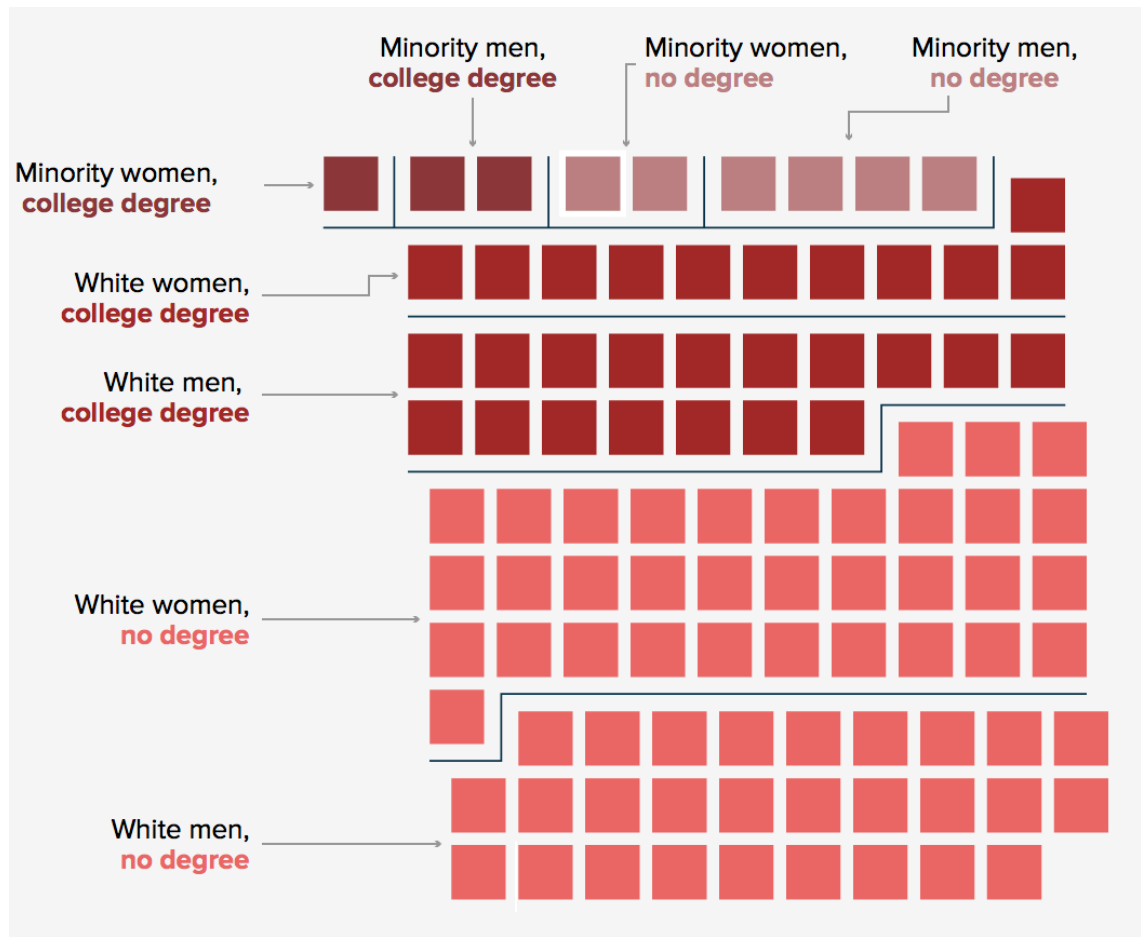


Figure 4. A Breakdown of Trump's voter base (McGill 2016).

It seems that Trump supporters hold strong, conservative values and tend to live in the rural parts of the United States. Compared to the rest of the U.S. population, Trump supporters have also been found to favour staying in their hometowns, in which they have usually lived their whole lives. In fact, 40% of Trump supporters live in the same community in which they spent their youth in. (Jones & Cox 2016.) These people living in their small hometowns, without higher education, watching as their birthplace slowly deteriorates as people move to the cities taking jobs with them, must feel hopelessly abandoned. Adding insult to injury is the constant risk of losing the job that many have been doing for their entire adult lives, as manufacturing and other non-college degree requiring jobs are being shipped off to cheaper countries like Mexico or China. All of this combined with the real risk, that for the first time in decades the current generation might be worse off than their parents, provides grim visions of the future to many (McKinsey Global Institute 2016). This was the situation when Trump entered the picture. Trump talked loudly about bringing jobs back to America and negotiating better

deals. He also questioned climate change, that is leading to mass unemployment in many rural areas, as coal mines and oil companies are being driven down by President Barack Obama and his henchwoman Hillary Clinton. (Loris 2016.) At least this is how the subject is perceived by many. Trump promised simply to make America great again, and at this point, many did not care how he was going to make this happen. Trump very successfully identified the frustrations, mind-set and fears of a large segment of voters, that he shamelessly tapped into, making promises he very well might not be able to keep. The important thing was to give the people hope of a better future, as becomes apparent in the Trump supporters' quotes below.

"So many of our politicians, they complain about this, they think things should be done, but they don't do a thing. I'm talking about the Republican Party, the establishment." (BBC News 2016.)

"Things got to a point where you couldn't work on a job and be able to pay your own bills. But the Mexicans were here working for probably at least half the pay and sometimes even less. So, when Trump came out with the immigration thing and the first thing out of the gate is that we're going to build a wall, we're going to send eleven million illegals back home, I was like, this man speaks my language." (BBC News 2016.)

"I thinks he'll create some jobs, I really do. You know. Or, all we can do is hope." (BBC News 2016.)

Recognising the type of people who vote for Trump and why, is crucial for understanding the judgements and feelings a person might harbour for the Trump brand. Beginning with the brand judgements, we face a similar situation as with the performance block of the brand resonance pyramid that was one of the topics of the previous chapter. Judgements about Trump's political prowess are hard to make since he has no mentionable experience in the area. The Trump brand is hard to accurately evaluate in other aspects as well, since the subject is known to be a skilled media manipulator and as a luxury brand, his products represent the higher end of the price scale, which is unreachable for many (Dvorak 2016). This leads to a situation in which many of the brand loyalists have little or no actual experience to judge the brand with, except for the mental images they have formed based on how the brand has appeared in public.

The fact that the Trump brand relies so heavily on the imagery block positioned on the previous level of the pyramid, begins to reveal the skewed nature of Trump's brand resonance pyramid. The lack of concrete evidence of his performance makes the judgements about the quality, credibility and superiority of the brand questionable at best. The weak foundation of these judgements might become a real problem for Trump later on if he will not be able to live up to the expectations of his target group that has shown him loyalty and trust beyond what the actual performance would recommend. Although, these brand judgements are consumers' personal opinions about the brand and the durability of the brand imagery has not failed Trump yet. This makes it hard to accurately evaluate the breaking point of the imagery or what has to actually happen for the brand loyalists to change their judgements. The imagery has managed to shield the Trump brand for the duration of the election quite well. In fact, the graph below shows how Trump's favourability clearly rose towards the end of the election (see figure 5). Maybe the strong imagery will continue to shield the brand judgements as well.

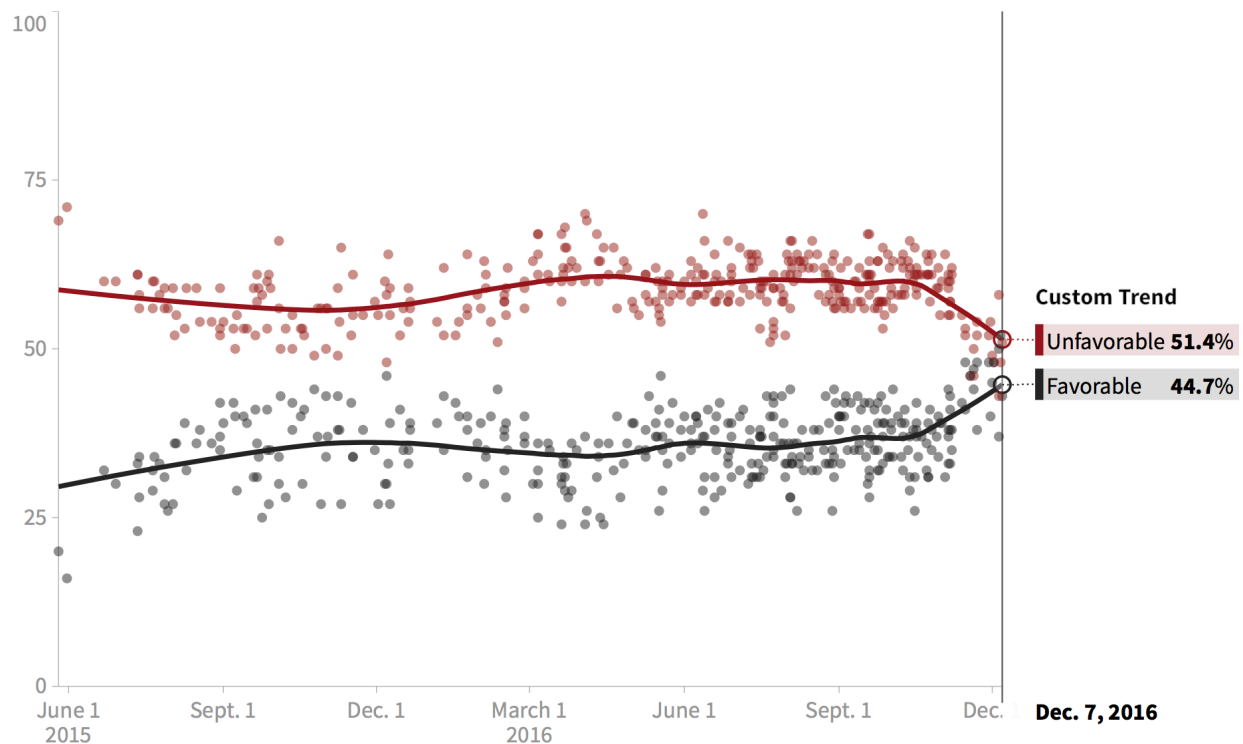


Figure 5. Trump's Favourability throughout the election (Huffington Post 2017).

During the election period, Trump's constant visibility in the media and controversial political views made sure that everyone had judgements to make about the candidate. But these judgements were supported by the strong feelings that Trump was able to evoke with the rich imagery of his brand and with his highly reactive and populist campaign. By being the complete opposite of what Americans call politically correct, Trump was able to stir emotions and tap into extreme ideas and topics that had never been discussed in such an open and emotional manner. Topics such as the banning of Muslim immigration to shelter the U.S. from terrorism, building a wall on the border of Mexico that Mexico is going to pay for and sanctioning drastic economic action against China and so on. The severity of the feelings evoked by Trump's promises and threats soon became apparent when acts of violence and unrest started to erupt at Trump's rallies (Lopez 2016). Trump effectively created an atmosphere that encouraged people to show their feelings and ultimately act upon them with his aggressive rhetoric. This way he strengthened the already existing feelings towards his brand. He fuelled them with sensations of fear and excitement.

"So if you see somebody getting ready to throw a tomato, knock the crap out of them, would you? Seriously. Okay? Just knock the hell... I promise you, I'll pay for the legal fees. I promise. I promise." (Trump 2016.)

"We are not allowed to punch back anymore. I love the old days. You know what they used to do to guys like that in a place like this? They'd be carried out in a stretcher folks." (Trump 2016.)

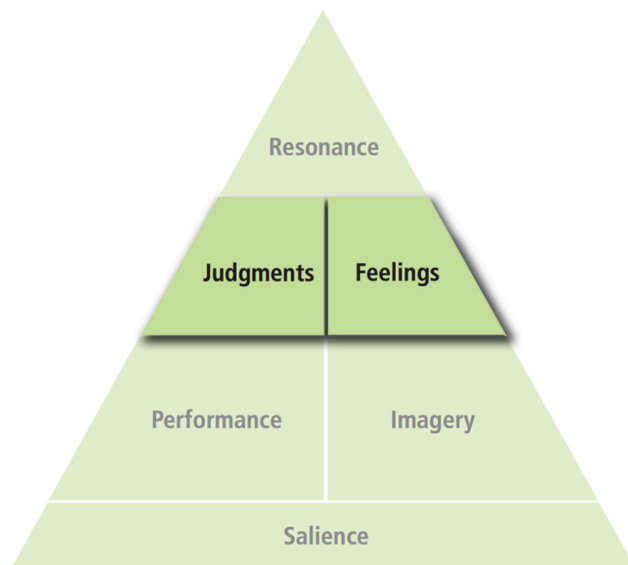
"All right, yeah, get him out. Try not to hurt him. If you do, I'll defend you in court. Don't worry about it. (Trump 2016.)

With comments like these Trump signalled that violence and indulging in intense feelings is an acceptable way of getting heard. He enforced his brand's credibility and superiority as a tough guy, ready to get his hands dirty. He needed to validate to his audience that the associations of him as a ruthless and effective guy that gets stuff done, were still accurate. By condoning violence and self-expression through it, Trump allowed his frustrated and angry audience to indulge in the hate and frustration that many have been bottling up for a long time. He created an atmosphere of exciting revolution, where his supporters could get anything they want and Trump would take the blame.

The brand feelings and imagery seem to form the most stable and solid blocks of Trump's brand resonance pyramid. As was described in the theory chapter of this thesis, the right side of the pyramid consisting of imagery and feelings, form the emotional route to brand resonance, which in Trump's case seems to be the prevailing route (Keller 2013, 107). The strong and intense feelings that Trump's supporters have for the brand are backed by the strong and unique associations Trump has managed to link to his name. What made the feelings of the supporters so intense was the context to which Trump placed his brand. With the help of pre-existing fears and frustrations Trump took his place as the top-of-mind brand among the target group. To many of his supporters, Trump provided empowerment, which lead to an active and engaging brand relationship based on mostly mental images and strong feelings. Trump had become, what Kevin Roberts calls a lovemark for his fans. Trump had become an object of immense respect that commands loyalty beyond reason. (Roberts 2004, 78-80.)

"Lovemarks are personal. And they can be anything – a person, a country, a car, an organization. Lovemarks are the charismatic brands that people love and fiercely protect." (Roberts 2004, 79.)

Feelings among Trump supporters such as excitement and self-respect created positive responses that other candidates' brands just did not do. Also, the strong feelings and judgements of Trump's opposers created a feedback loop that seemingly enforced and solidified the feelings and judgements of his supporters leading to stronger and more polarised opinions on both sides. Trump capitalised on these strong feelings and judgements by fuelling them with his typical behaviour, forcing voters to pick sides, which were Trump's side and not Trump's side. This diminished the significance of the other candidates to a single mass operating on not Trump's side. During the campaign, Trump chipped away at the opposing side by forcing his opponents to quit one at a time and then having them join his cause with promises of good positions in his administration. Many took this deal and endorsed Trump, which increased his momentum with every new ally he made. (Bukspan 2016.) At the time of the general election, Trump's momentum had gotten large enough to push him to victory. All of this happened with the help of the strong feelings of the voters that in the end, were not even based on much else than mental images and overwhelming salience the Trump brand had managed to gather.



Judgements & Feelings

- The strong feelings of Trump's supporters superseded the possible judgements they might have had towards the brand.
- Trump's polarizing rhetoric created an open field for even the most extreme emotions to roam free among supporters.
- The strong resistance against Trump had a unifying role among the supporters.

7.4 Resonance

The United States politics have never seen anything like the election of 2016 before. The heated battle between the two most disliked candidates in history left the nation polarised and gasping at the results. The media has never covered the presidential elections in such detail as they covered this one. (Rasmus 2016.) This was all due to the absolute underdog of the race who blew everyone away and revealed an America that even the numerous polls were unable to see. (Stein 2016.) Many were left in confusion, questioning and fearing for the future of their country, and maybe for a good reason. But it is safe to say that for this kind of a revolution to happen you need something that truly resonates with a large portion of the population and that something, in this case, was Donald Trump.

The top of the brand resonance pyramid is formed just by the brand resonance, which describes the ultimate relationship a person can have with a brand. For a brand to resonate, it has to be in perfect sync with its consumers and have a deep psychological bond that speaks to the consumers and activates them. Four criteria can be extracted to see whether a brand truly resonates with its consumers: active engagement, sense of community, behavioural loyalty and attitudinal attachment. (Keller 2013, 120-122.)

Figuring out whether the Trump brand resonates with its audience was never the main point of this analysis. The main point was to understand how the Trump brand came to

resonate with its audience so strongly. The fact that Donald Trump will become the next President of the United States is quite strong proof of brand resonance in itself. He managed to reach a huge portion of the United States' voters with his message and convince them to actively take part in aiding him to victory. By any measure, that is not a small achievement. In this final part of the analysis I will pull the results of the previous parts of the analysis together.

It seems that Trump's supporters exhibited all of the four beforementioned criteria for brand resonance during the campaign. As a sign of active engagement, Trump's rallies attracted massive crowds of passionate supporters throughout the election. Although, the already large number of attendants was not enough for Trump. He actively exaggerated the numbers to make his momentum seem even more profound. And when the media tried to correct Trump's claims, he lashed out and blamed the media for trying to diminish him. (Sullivan & Johnson 2016.) This strategy made him even more relatable in the eyes of his supporters that in many cases, were also being diminished by the current way of the liberal world as was found out in the previous chapter of this analysis. The active engagement with the Trump brand in his rallies and exposure through extensive media coverage, enforced the other criteria necessary for brand resonance to happen. People met like-minded Trump supporters as the movement grew, which resulted in a strong sense of community. With a mind-set of, us against the rest of the world, people conformed into Trump's populist ideals, which resulted in strong behavioural loyalty and attitudinal attachment that sometimes manifested even as violent breakouts. People had such strong feelings about Trump on both sides that many were ready to physically defend their ideas against opposers. (Lind 2016.)

In Trump's case, I would still stress one factor to better define his success. That factor is situational context. Trump's brand achieved its massive momentum with the help of the situation present at the moment of the 2016 elections. The recent events of the world such as the fear of radical Islamic terrorism, global economic problems and the rising economic inequality set the scene for Trump-branded populism. The surprising results of the Brexit-vote, that took place in the summer of 2016, was the result of the same kind of populism. Trump capitalised on every downturn that happened in the world, enforcing his fear mongering strategy and this way making himself more relevant in the eyes of his target group. With the help of extraordinary luck or either extremely clever analysis on the world's current condition, Trump placed his brand into the right

situational context that allowed brand resonance to happen. Although, Trump's brand resonance might soon be in trouble as the situational context shifts and the competitors around him fade away, leaving just Trump alone on the stage with his claims and promises.

8 Conclusions

The brand resonance pyramid formed by Trump's brand clearly shows the emotion driven path to brand resonance and reveals the Trump brand's role as the emotional engine that fuelled Trump's supporters throughout the elections. Climbing the right side of the pyramid has left the brand resonance block teetering on the summit (see figure 6 below). It would seem that the resonance of the Trump brand is formed on unstable foundations and if Trump wants to continue as he has done so far, he has to fulfil the opaque performance and judgement blocks that at this moment are lacking substance.

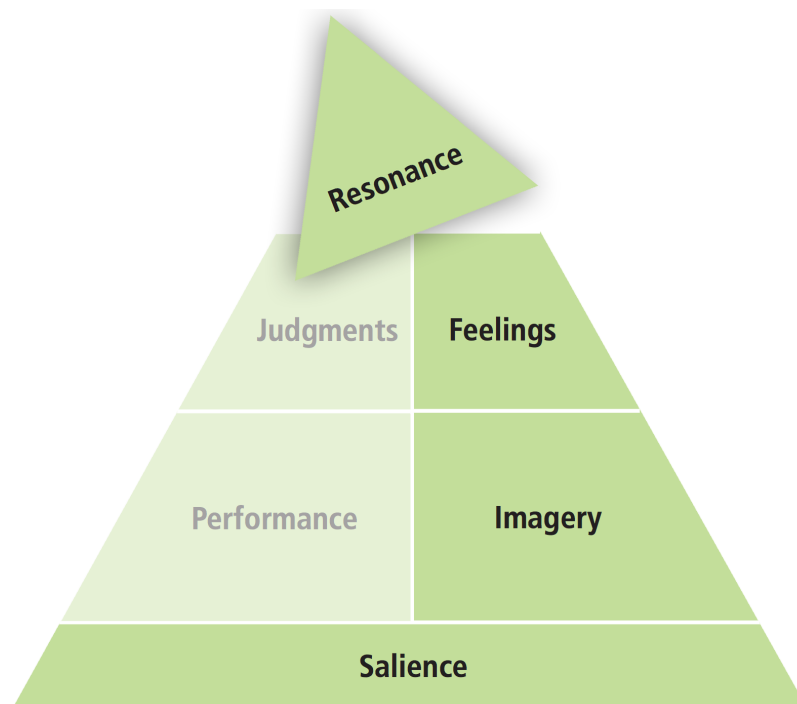


Figure 6. Donald Trump's Brand Resonance Pyramid

The first weeks of the Trump administration already showed the drastic actions Trump is willing to take to show the people that he is a man of his word. Using the president's

executive powers, Trump has begun to undo the work of his predecessor in a swift but chaotic manner. The most dramatic order being the immigration ban from several Muslim countries such as Syria and Iraq which are in dire need of help. (Lima 2017.) The executive order was faced with sharp condemnation from foreign governments and sparked protests around the country. (Sherlock 2017.) The order was ultimately lifted due to it being unconstitutional, which further demonstrates the state of brewing chaos within the White House. (Brettschneider 2017.) These actions by Trump clearly show that he also realises the weakness of the performance of his brand. He clearly tries to fix the deficiencies with any means necessary, which creates an aura of unpredictability around him. Ultimately this leaves us wondering, what he is going to do next to try to prove his worth to his voters.

As was predicted in the analysis, it seems that the Trump brand shows very little willingness to change or adapt to the expectations of the presidential position. In fact, if anything the curiosities of the Trump brand have only taken a turn for the worse. As an example, most of the time it is not really fair to speak about truthful hyperboles anymore as most of the things he publicly says or tweets are proved to be just blatant lies (see figure 7 below). It should be needless to state the importance of facts when one is running a country such as the United States. Trump's seemingly compulsive need to lie even about the most menial things is sure to cause problems on a global scale. (Konnikova 2017.)

The PolitiFact scorecard

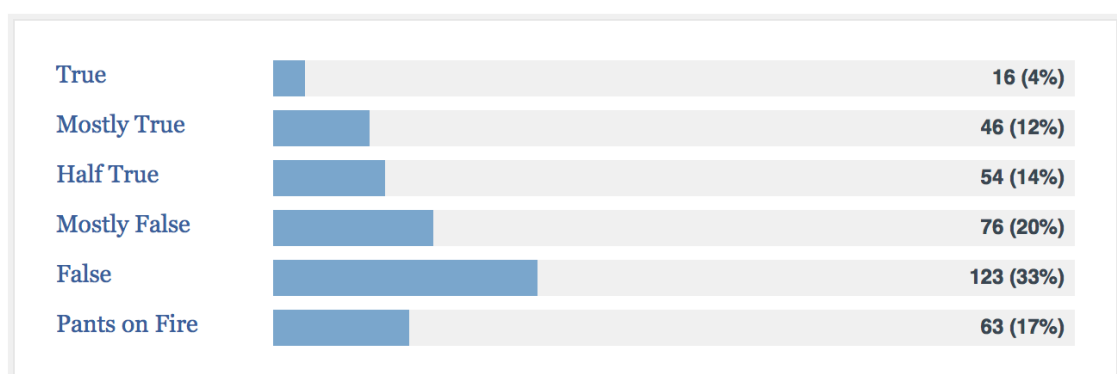


Figure 7. Politifact Scorecard of Trump's Statements. (Politifact 2017).

When looking at the central theme of this thesis, how Trump got elected, it is important to remember the relevance of prevailing circumstances. The political polarisation and dissatisfaction with the government has been clearly on the rise after the election and re-election of Barack Obama. A black left-wing president was a bitter pill to swallow for many Republicans and a powerful source of political energy. This can be seen in the clear rise of extreme right-wing activity after Barack Obama's election. The number of active radical right –groups went from around 150 in 2008 to 1360 in 2012 after Obama's re-election. Trump on the other hand has clearly done his part in fuelling the flames of these groups as the number of active groups has grown even further in Trump's era. With his rhetoric, Trump has signalled to these right-wing groups that their extreme ideas are valid and ok to be brought out. (Potok 2016.) This further demonstrates how Trump has taken advantage of the prevailing political sentiments and used them for his own good.

Only future will show us the true effects of Trump's presidency, but the beginning is definitely showing chaotic elements that signal that Trump's presidency might be just as unstable as his brand's resonance. The polarised nation is already showing signs of instability with open riots in the streets and constant scandals that follow each other so quickly that the media can't seem to keep up. (Garcia 2017). The events of the 2016 elections have yet again confirmed the importance of emotions in modern branding. People are emotional creatures and even though we would like to think that our decisions are based on rational thought, most often this is not the case. It is a frightening thought that people are ready and willing to make such important decisions based on feelings only, despite the media revealing inconsistencies and false claims left and right. Maybe Trump's presidency will lead the world to a state of overcorrection and to a true valuation of facts and rational thought instead of temporal feelings.

My aim for this thesis was to give the reader a well-researched look into the events of the 2016 presidential elections from a branding point of view. I attempted at evaluating the Trump brand's role in the election and to realise the elements that contributed most to the Trump brand's journey to the White House. For several months, I continuously followed various media sources and wrote down my thoughts and conclusions about the topic, which I would later on iterate based on new information that had come to light. Repeating this process multiple times during a time period of over nine months has left me with a set of conclusions and realisations which I hopefully managed to present clearly in this thesis.

The brand resonance pyramid model proved to be a versatile and effective tool for depicting the Trump brand's role in this election. Following its structure clearly led me to the realisation of the emotional path that helped Trump to victory. The model also effectively brought out the weaknesses of the Trump brand in a way that possibly helps us to get a glimpse or even predict the future of Trump's presidency. In general, I would recommend this model for anyone looking to analyse personal brands. The model effectively provided the stepping stones that helped to structure the analysis in a logical way and made it natural to jump from realisation to another. The brand resonance pyramid is also complex enough for it to provide a comprehensive view of multiple aspects, which is necessary when analysing topics as complicated and layered as this.

The both weakness and strength of this paper are its currency. This paper was written as the events of the 2016 elections were happening and therefore I had to mainly rely on media sources such as The Washington Post, New York Times, Politico and The Atlantic for the most current events. Even though these sources are reputable, due to the currency, not all of the relevant information might have come in. This might lead to the changing of some perspectives presented in this paper, but on the other hand it gives an interesting look into the way things were perceived as they unfolded. Although, I feel confident that the facts and information gathered by the media sources are accurate and the perspectives presented will also continue to be insightful and relevant in the future.

For further research, it would be interesting to see a more in-depth evaluation of the media's role in these elections or elections in general. It might bring some useful insights which could help political brands to prepare themselves for future elections. Also in general, it will be extremely interesting to follow the evolution of the Trump brand and see perhaps how his businesses will be affected by his presidency and what new characteristic and associations will come along. All in all, I am sure that Donald Trump will continue to provide an interesting look into what happens when things are taken to the extreme.

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